

A SHORT NARRATIVE
OF
Lieutenant General EDMESTON's Conduct,
During the first four Years of the Rebellion in AMERICA.

I was made Prisoner by the Rebels in North America, on the 28th of May, 1776, when on leave of absence from Grenada, at my Farm, in the province of New York, for having succoured and assisted the Friends of Government in that quarter; from whence, I was sent to Albany, where they forgot to bind me by parole; from which circumstance, I could have easily effected my escape to Canada, or to the British Troops at New York, to either of which, it would have been my interest to have gone, and by acting with the army in my professional line, I should have avoided many risques and imminent dangers, which I was there daily exposed to. But, the Loyalists who were a very considerable and respectable body at Albany, and in that neighbourhood; (many of whom I visited daily in the jails, where they were confined,) told me I must not leave them, for they wanted the assistance of experienced Officers, as they were determined to erect the King's Standard there, and only waited for Sir Guy Carleton crossing Lake George, or Sir William Howe opening a passage through the Highlands, obstructed by some Forts which the Rebels had erected there; and that as soon as either of these events should take place, they would put me at the head of a considerable body of men; flattered by this prospect, and seeing the distress they were in, I could not think of leaving them, and from that time, until I went into New York, in February 1777, I made every exertion that could in any degree favour the Royal Cause, by supporting and encouraging the Loyalists on every emergency, and by printing and circulating papers and proclamations, which latter made the whole of the Militia desert from Lake George, in the month of October, (when Sir Guy Carlton defeated General Arnold) and return home to their families. Vide Certificate No. I.

In February, 1777, I was permitted to go into New York, with leave to send out an Officer of equal rank in exchange, and was instructed to transact business with Lord and General Sir William Howe, similar to that on which the unfortunate Major André perished; I was directed to send out a confidential person into the rebel country to settle the arrangements; but knowing I had a character of duplicity to deal with, I therefore, fearful any agent I should send out, might be deceived and overreached by the party, with whom I was transacting the most momentous affairs; and which were, to use Sir William Howe's words in his letter to Lord Dorchester, of the utmost consequence to the Northern Army advancing to Albany; (vide No. II.) so much was I devoted to the service of my King and Country, that in order to ensure success, I ventured out again to Albany, at the peril and hazard of my life, not only from the suspicions and active vigilance of the Rebels, (vide No. III.) but also from an ill state of health, which would have made close confinement in a jail equally fatal; (vide No. IV.) besides which, there
were

were then languishing in Albany jail, three Printers threatened with the gallows, for having printed and circulated by my appointment, such papers as are mentioned in No. I, III, and V, together with other clouds hanging over my head ready to burst, viz. Andries Huyck, vide, Peter Van Schaack's No. III. But before I was permitted to go into New York, I was told, I could not be suffered to go through, or even near their post at Peck's Kill, about sixty miles from New York; and they sent me by a road remote from that post, which excited in my mind a probability of striking a blow against them in that quarter; and when returning back into the rebel country in March, I took measures accordingly, and by a well formed plan, we destroyed that post, where there were about five hundred thousand pounds worth of stores, deposited for the use of Washington's army, distant at that time, about thirty miles, all of which was executed without any loss on our side; (vide Lieut. General Sherriff's certificate, No. VI & VII) but here my danger became very considerable, for the Convention then sitting at Eufopus, who were much chagrined at their loss, ordered me to be sent from Albany, and investigated my conduct so thoroughly, that they sent for all the Innkeeper's on the road where I had stopped, as also for Waggoners who had driven me for many miles, and interrogated them upon oath respecting my conduct; they also appointed a Committee of three of the ablest of the Convention, to whom I was handed over for examination; which they did artfully, separately, and at a distance of time, from about ten to twelve days interval, asking such questions as they thought most likely to make the discovery of my guilt. However most providentially for me, Colonel Beverley Robinson, who lived within six miles of the above post of Peck's Kill, had made his escape a few days before into New York, where he raised a Provincial Regiment for the King's service, this fortunate event, I conceive, saved my life, by dividing their suspicion, doubtful to which of us to ascribe their disaster.

Finding no positive proof against me, they sent me to Philadelphia, recommending it to the Congress, to examine me afresh, and if they could make no discoveries against me, they advised I should be sent to the back-settlements of Virginia, and be there kept a prisoner during the war, for they judged me to be a dangerous person. (vide No. III and VIII.

I had been gone but a few days from the Convention at Eufopus, when a discovery was made by a Recruit, that a Regiment was raising in my name, in the neighbourhood of Albany, which produced an order for confining me in a prison ship, (vide Commissary Cuyler's certificate, No. IV.)

I travelled about five hundred miles before I got my most material business done, during all which time I was exposed to many hardships and insults; and was from their suspicions, long detained a prisoner, by which I lost the emoluments of the Regiment raised for me in the neighbourhood of Albany, and put on the establishment by the late General Burgoyne, in August, 1777. Here I cannot help observing, that had my zeal been less, and I more indifferent as to events, I should have consulted my own personal advantage, as well as ease and safety, and pursued that which unquestionably was most my own interest, by acquiescing to all that the different parties concerned had required of me, merely to have sent out a trusty agent; in which case the affair of Peck's Kill would not have been executed, nor would the other business, if it had been effected, been done in the positive terms for which I stipulated, and which was done to the full extent of my direction from Sir William Howe; (vide No. IX) but on the contrary, I should have enjoyed the emoluments of a Regiment for six years to the end of the war.

I could enumerate many other circumstances equally strong as the above, but that I conceive would be entering too much into detail.



CERTIFICATE No. I.

I JAMES ROBERTSON, late of New York, Printer, do make Oath, that I was employed by Colonel Edmeston, at Albany, in 1776, to print the Declaration of the Commissioners, Lord and General Howe; and that, after delivering the Colonel a number of copys of said declaration, they were dispersed to the people at large, and that the desertion and disaffection which immediately took place among the Militia, was imputed to the promises held forth in said declaration: that I was sent for and examined by the Committee, and threatened with close confinement, if I would not discover who had furnished the copy, and answer such interrogatories, upon Oath, as they should state, and represented the mischief these declarations had done. I then requested time to consult with my brother, who could better ascertain the number printed; by which means I gained time to consult with Colonel Edmeston, who advised me to fly to New York, and furnished me with a recommendatory note to Captain M^c Kenzie, Secretary to General Howe. I further make Oath, that I went to Colonel Edmeston, when in New York, some time in February or March, 1777, previous to his leaving that city, to go to Albany, and requested him to apply to the Commissioners to interpose their good offices to save the lives of my brother Alexander Robertson and two servants, William Lewis and Patrick Kelly, who were then confined in Albany, and threatened with the gallows, for having (by appointment of Colonel Edmeston) printed and circulated many hundred copies of the Proclamation of the Commissioners; and that the Colonel afterwards told me, "That he had represented the situation of my brother and two servants to Lord Howe, General Howe being then in New Jersey; and that his Lordship very judiciously and wisely considered, that his interference would rather hurt than render any service to the prisoners." We were therefore obliged to leave them to their fate, whatever might be the event.—I also make Oath, that my brother, after being exchanged in December following, told me, that Col. Edmeston, on his return to Albany, had run a risk in conveying some money to him for his support.

JAMES ROBERTSON.

*Sworn at Guild-hall, London, the Fourteenth
day of April, in the Year 1784, before me*

JOHN HART.

No. II.

Extract of Sir WILLIAM HOWE's Letter, dated New York, April 5th, 1777, to Sir GUY CARLETON.

MAJOR EDMESTON, of the 48th regiment, having been long detained a prisoner at Albany, has at last obtained leave to come here to negotiate his exchange; I have thought fit to send him back to Albany, to tell Schuyler, that if he will permit him to go to Canada, I will return a Major in exchange: he has information of too delicate a nature to commit to paper, and of the utmost consequence to the northern armies advancing to Albany, which, I trust, he will find means of communicating, even though he should be refused leave to go to Canada in person.

No. III.

SIR,

I am extremely ready to do you the justice of bearing testimony to the facts I enumerated yesterday; and particularly I remember your being apprehended in January, 1777, at Albany, by order of
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the Committee; and I saw you in custody of a party of men, headed by a Colonel in the continental service, who had seized your papers, although the most material of them very strangely, and for you, very fortunately escaped, being concealed between the bedstead and bedding. This was the 7th of January, which I am enabled to ascertain from the circumstance of my being before the Committee on the same day, in pursuance of the order of which I have given you a copy; and I understand that there was a like order for sending you to Boston at the same time. I have very frequently heard, and indeed it was a matter of notoriety among the Loyalists, that there were many thousand copies of Lord and General Howe's proclamations dispersed through the country, which, with many other papers in favor of the Royal Cause, were printed at Albany, at a press which was employed by you, and was under your immediate direction, and for which the printers were afterwards imprisoned many months in the public gaol.

With respect to Andries Huyck, who was tried for treasonable practices, and though he escaped with his life yet suffered a pecuniary fine; I remember to have heard that the evidence against him arose from a discovery of some intercourse he had with you; and I very well know that you was considered by the leading men at Albany as a very dangerous man, and I believe they were puzzled what to do with you; for while it was the opinion of some of them to permit you to go into the King's lines, as being enabled there to do them less injury than while you was at Albany—others were, I believe, of a different opinion; and I remember to have heard General Gates, in the fall 1776, observe, that it would be extremely wrong to suffer a man of your knowledge of the country, and at the same time a military man, to go within the enemy's lines.

I could enumerate other circumstances tending to the same points as above, and proving your exertions in favor of Government—your narrow escapes, notwithstanding the vigilance of your enemies, and the dangerous light in which they viewed you;—but you must be convinced that these are delicate topics.

I am, very respectfully,

Your obedient servant,

[signed] PETER VAN SCHAACK.

London, July 11, 1781.

LIEUT. COL. EDMESTON.

No. IV.

THESE may certify, that the subscriber, on his arrival a prisoner at Eufopus, in the province of New York, was very credibly informed by persons of veracity, that an order had arrived a few days after Lieutenant Colonel Edmeston had left that place, (where he had been some time a prisoner confined to his room) for the close confinement of him on board the prison ship, (on suspicion of his being very dangerous, and immediately acting against the Americans) which very disagreeable confinement on board a most nauseous prison ship, so crowded that there was not room for all to lay down, swarming with vermin, and every other disagreeableness, he avoided by having left the town a few days before the order arrived. This I certify to be a just and true state of what was told me. As witness my hand, in New York, this 9th day of December, 1781.

[signed]

HENRY CUYLER,
Reduced Commissary of Stores.

No. V.

No. V.

I do hereby certify, that I remember to have seen Colonel Van Schaack, Commanding Officer of the Americans at Albany, together with four committee men of the said place, come to my father's house some time in January, in the year 1777, and search the lodging room of Colonel Edmeston, for papers, and that they carried the said Colonel Edmeston before the Committee then sitting at the City Hall, and I further declare, that there were at the same time, in said room, laying between the bedstead and bedding, several hundred copies of Lord and General Howe's Proclamations, and many other papers, which Colonel Edmeston had printed at a press he employed at Albany, in support of the Royal Cause; all of which, most providentially for the Colonel, were overlooked by the searchers, and immediately on their leaving the house, I carried off the said Proclamations, &c. to a place of safety, and they were afterwards circulated by order of Colonel Edmeston, previous to his return from New York, for which the printer Alexander Robinson was imprisoned many months, on suspicion of his having printed and circulated them.

[signed]

RICHARD CARTWRIGHT.

*Sworn before me at Niagara, this 27th day
of July, in the year of our Lord 1784,*

In presence of us

JOHN M^c LAUGHLIN,
ALEXANDER KENEDY.

[signed]

A. L. DE PEYSTER,
*Lieutenant Colonel to the King's, or 8th Regiment,
Commanding the upper Posts and Lakes, &c.*

No. VI.

THESE are to certify, that Lieutenant Colonel William Edmeston, of His Majesty's forty eighth Regiment, came to me in New York, some time in February or March, 1777, and told me, that he was going out into the Rebel Country, on particular business, by desire of the Commissioners Lord and General Sir William Howe, and desired I would furnish him with a convenient conveyance out of the British lines; requesting at the same time, I would send with him, a person I could perfectly confide in, and in whom confidence might be put; that in compliance with his request, I accordingly sent with him a person of the above description, who was a Captain of waggoners; and that the said person, after his return, came to me immediately, telling me that Lieutenant Col. Edmeston, had carried him as far as the rebel post at Peck's Kill, shewn him every thing there with his remarks thereupon, and that he had express orders from Lieutenant Col. Edmeston, at his return, to wait immediately on General Agnew, and upon myself, to inform us from him, to acquaint Sir William Howe, that if five or six hundred men were immediately sent up by water, that they might with safety destroy the whole depot of stores collected there, to a very considerable amount, for the use of Washington's army; and in consequence of the above information, a detachment of five hundred men were immediately sent out under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Bird, of the 15th Regiment, and Captain Ferguson of the Brune Frigate, who destroyed the whole of the above stores, without any loss on the side of the King's Troops.

WILLIAM SHERRIFF.

M. Q. M. General.

No. VII.

No. VII.

London, March 12, 1782

Dear Colonel,

AFTER perusing the inclosed, I do not see how any thing in my power to add, can, in the least degree, strengthen what is already expressed; the facts of the destruction of Washington's stores, to a very considerable amount, at Peck's Kill, and our having accomplished it without any loss, being so very notorious upon record, as not to require, I should conceive, any further certificate; which otherwise, from having been on that service, (as second in command to the late Colonel Bird), I should very willingly certify in the strongest terms in my power;

Being, dear Sir,

Your very obedient humble Servant,

HENRY HOPE,

Lieutenant Colonel of the 44th Regiment.

LIEUT. COL. EDMESTON.

No. VIII.

Cambridge, New England, March 8, 1778.

Dear Sir,

I have the pleasure to acquaint you, of my arrival here, after a fatiguing journey, from Philadelphia.——I must also acquaint you, that the letter you gave me in charge to Colonel Hooper, the American Commissary of Prisoners, I sent into Washington's camp, with all the others I brought from Philadelphia, for examination; and upon my arrival at Easttown, I found your letter was the only one stoppt by Washington, which a good deal surprized me, as I did not recollect any thing in particular in the letter, more than your thanks to Col. Hooper, for his humanity to the british prisoners under his care: possible you can account for the stoppage of your letter.

I am,

Sir,

Your most obedient humble Servant,

[signed]

JONA CLARKE,

Commissary to the Convention Army.

LIEUT. COL. EDMESTON.

No. IX.

Certificate of Sir WILLIAM HOWE, K. B.

London, July 12th, 1782.

I certify, that Lieutenant Colonel Edmeston, of the 75th regiment, voluntarily offered, and did go out of New York, to Albany. as mentioned in my letter of the 5th of April, 1777, to Sir Guy Carleton, which was laid before the House of Commons:—that he was then in an ill state of health—did not stipulate for any reward—nor has he had any from me, or from any other quarter that I know of, for the above good services, which he rendered entirely to my satisfaction, and the benefit of his Majesty's service.

[signed]

W. HOWE.

No. X.

No. X.

LORD GEORGE GERMAIN'S *Justification of himself, for having laid the Extract of GEN. HOWE'S Letter before Parliament.*

Pall Mall, July 31, 1778.

SIR,

I am much concerned to find, by a letter of yours, dated June 5, from Philadelphia, that you have been exposed to any inconvenience in consequence of an extract from a letter of General Howe, to General Carleton, dated, New York, April 5, 1777, having been laid before Parliament, in which your name was mentioned.

You will. I am persuaded, upon reconsidering the matter, do me the justice to believe, that I, who have not the honour of being known to you, could have no motive of so injurious a nature, as those which you have imputed to me, for having laid that particular extract before the House of Commons. The part I had to take in that business was merely official, in obedience to the orders of the King, in pursuance of an address to His Majesty, from that House. So far were ministers from being wanton in bringing forward papers, which might do prejudice to particular persons, that they did in their places, withstand, and take the sense of the House upon divers papers, which were moved for, merely upon the ground, of the probability, of their being detrimental to individuals; nor can it be the interest, or inclination of any Secretary of State, to expose to hardships particular persons of merit.

Had this extract been part of a private letter to me, I should have been under no obligation to have produced it; but whatever is written in public dispatches, and entered among the papers of the office, whoever presides in that office, must obey the orders he receives from the Crown, to lay them before Parliament. In the present instance, however, I did not see the paragraph you mention, as affecting your credit in any degree; but, on the contrary, that the General had trusted you with intelligence of importance concerning the progress of the northern army: It struck no body on this side of the water, as casting the least reflection on you, and I am sorry you see it in so different a point of view; for I can assure you, that nothing could be more contrary to the inclinations of those Ministers who serve His Majesty, than to injure, in any degree, an Officer of your merit and long service.

I am, Sir,

With great truth,

Your obedient humble Servant,

GEORGE GERMAIN.

No. XI.

I am ready and willing, if necessary, to make oath, that I heard the Rebel General Knox declare publicly, in Philadelphia, that if Lieutenant Colonel Edmeston had not got out of their hands, before that letter of Sir William Howe's to Sir Guy Carleton, which was laid before the House of Commons, came into their hands, that they should have treated the said Lieutenant Colonel as a Spy, and hung him accordingly, as from the tenor of the above letter, they deemed themselves justified in so doing, or words to that effect.

[signed]

CHARLES HURST.

*London,
July 4th, 1781.*

No. XII.

No. XII.

London, June 12, 1783.

SIR,

I am very ready and willing to do you the justice of bearing testimony of what I know relative to you, concerning the letter of Sir William Howe to Sir Guy Carleton, that was laid before the House of Commons, dated April 5th, 1777, and in which there was mention made of your name:—I well remember that it was the opinion of the General Officers of Mr. Washington's army, that the letter was proof sufficient to have condemned you as a Spy, and I make not the least doubt that you would have been executed as such, had you been in the power of Mr. Washington when the letter was published.

I am,

Sir,

Your most obedient humble Servant,

[signed] B. ARNOLD,
Brigadier General.

LIEUT. COL. EDMESTON.

No. XIII.

Pall Mall, February 8, 1782.

SIR,

I have done whatever depended upon me with the Treasury, to have your situation properly considered; and, as I am now going out of office, I will again recommend your case to their consideration, in the strongest manner I am able. It was very unnecessary to send me the inclosed certificates, as I was very sensible of the justice of your claims, and the services you had done the King in America. All the Officers of the Staff are recommended by the Commander in Chief, if not appointed by him; so that it has never been in my power to assist you, by procuring for you any of the employments you mention in your letter.

I am,

Sir,

With great Regard,

Your most obedient humble Servant,

GEORGE GERMAIN.

No. XIV.

Pall Mall, March 29, 1782.

SIR,

I am very sorry that your claim upon Government has met with so little success. When I was in office, I used my best endeavours to have your merit properly considered: if I could not succeed then, my application would not be more attended to at present: but indeed Lord North cannot now assist you; for I understand he quits his office this morning. If ever my bearing testimony to your services and sufferings, can be of the least use, you may freely command me; for I should be happy if I could be the means of your receiving com-

compensation for the loss you suffered by the publishing of that letter from my late office, in obedience to the order of the House of Commons. I should still hope that your letter to Sir Grey Cooper may have had some good effect, before the Treasury closed their business yesterday.

I am,

Sir,

With great Regard,

Your faithful humble Servant,

SACKVILLE.

No. XV.

Drayton, August 30, 1783.

SIR,

I yesterday received the favour of your letter of the 21st of this month, and I am sorry to find, that so little attention has been shewn to the claims you have upon Government. I shall be happy in stating your case to Lord North, whenever you shall think it proper for your interest that I should do it. I had rather converse with him upon the subject, than to write to him, as I think I could explain several points to him in conversation better than I could state them upon paper. I see no impropriety in you asking an audience of His Majesty, and laying in writing the whole state of your case before him: the King always inclines to do justice to Officers of service and of merit; and if he should think proper to refer your memorial to Lord North, or to any other of the Ministers, it must then meet with immediate attention.

I return you Sir William Howe's and Mr. Arnold's notes, as they may be of use to you, and can be of none to me, as I was equally persuaded of the facts before they were confirmed by such good authority.

I sincerely wish you the success you are so justly entitled to.

I am,

Sir,

With great Truth,

Your obedient humble Servant,

SACKVILLE.



